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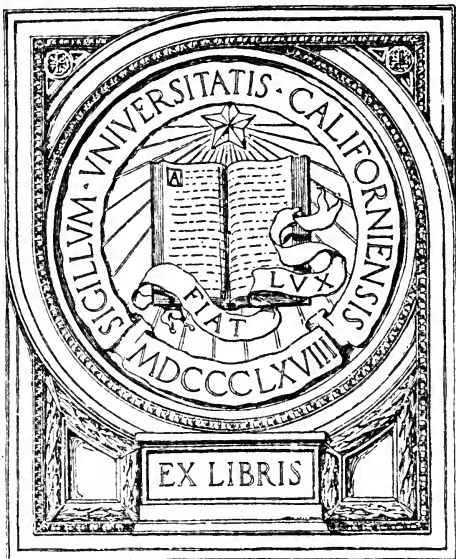
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*With the author's grateful regards*

# HISTORY

BY

BERNADOTTE PERRIN, Ph.D.

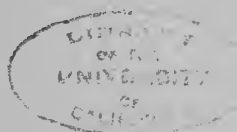
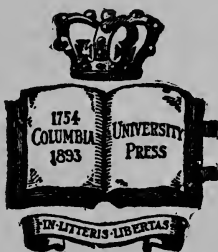
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TO VINU  
AIRBORNE



## HISTORY

WHEN Alexander the Great crossed into Asia on his long career of conquest, he took a trained historian with him. He was conscious of making history of which men after him would be glad to read. But many centuries of Greek history found no recording historians. They would have been interesting to us, who are so absorbed in origins and developments, in causality and evolution, in "historical relativity," that we begrudge oblivion any data whatsoever. But they were not interesting enough to contemporary Greeks to find chroniclers. Speaking broadly, it always required some great spectacular struggle — the Trojan War, the Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the duel between Sparta and Thebes, the Hellenic conquest of Asia — to elicit, as it were, a great historian; and Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Cleitarchus are the canonical names corresponding to these spectacular struggles. There are others, of course, but these tower above all, and the others are usually little more than names to us. Polybius also was moved to compose his great work by the transcendent struggle between Rome and Carthage; but Polybius, though writing in Greek, had become, by long residence in Rome, and intimate association with leading Romans, more than half Roman in spirit. Not forgetting the sensational Duris of Samos, nor the learned antiquarian Timaeus of Tauromenium, we may say that distinctively Greek historiography ends with the historians of Alexander's career. And it ends, as it begins, with a triumph of fancy and invention over fact and re-presentation. In the middle ground, in Thucydides

and Xenophon, the desire to inform is duly enthroned beside the desire to please; but the Greek hearer or reader usually preferred a flight of the imagination to a statement of the truth, and the sovereign names among the Greeks themselves were Homer, Herodotus, Ephorus, and Cleitarchus, names representing a body of highly imaginative and mainly fictitious poetry, and a body of highly imaginative and largely fictitious prose.

Well on into that greatest century of Greek life and thought which began five hundred years before Christ, the Homeric poems, and especially the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, were regarded by most Greeks as authentic history. Achilles, Agamemnon, Andromache, Odysseus, Laertes, and Penelope had actually and in very person fought, ruled, suffered, wandered, grieved, and been steadfast to the end, even as they are there described. Thersites had railed at the Atreidae, Diomedes had wounded Aphrodite, Hector had slain Patroclus, Achilles had slain Hector, and aged Priam had ransomed the dead body of his son, even as we now read in the *Iliad*. Ilios, the proud city of the Troad, commanding the Hellespont and the Euxine Sea, had been captured and sacked by the leagued hosts of the Lord of Mycenae, a city which dominated Peloponnesus, and the hosts had met with various dooms on their various ways home. All this had long been history to the Greeks, just as the book of Genesis has long been history to Christian peoples. Skepticism, doubt, and denial met with the same scornful reproaches in the first case which they have evoked in the second. We now know — at least Professor Murray, and those who think approximately as he does, know — that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are traditional race-poems,<sup>1</sup> slowly evolved through the centuries which saw tribes of hardy Northerners sweep gradually down into the Aegean basin and appropriate by conquest and assimilation the rich culture existing there.

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 2d ed., Oxford, 1911.

The ruins which amaze the discoverer at Troy, Cnossus, Mycenae, and Orchomenus speak impressively of the power and splendor of that submerged culture.

The invaders were a song-folk. They sang because they had to sing. They sang of the achievements and adventures of their gods and heroes. One generation of them would become heroes and demigods to the next generation, and that generation to the next, and each sang of the prowess of the past. A traditional poesy arose, shot through with "a fiery intensity of imagination," and served by a language "more gorgeous than Milton's, yet as simple and direct as that of Burns." Into the crucible of this traditional poesy were poured for centuries the migrations and conquests of tribes; the oversea expeditions of thalassocratic cities; racial myths and legends. Into the crucible went also the absolute fictions of a powerfully creative imagination laboring at high pressure to supply a keen demand. The centre of poetic activity shifted from the European to the Asiatic side of the Aegean, and from Aeolians to Ionians. Guilds of poets flourished in the chief Ionian cities, who slowly fashioned the molten material from the great crucible of epic poesy into the definite structures of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and then went on to complete in later compositions the epic cycle which the elder epics logically and chronologically demanded. If material was lacking, the gap was filled by fresh creation until the cycle was complete, and then the epic impulse slowly died. These later epics, ascribed to individual and historical poets, have perished. But the central poems around which they had been made to cluster assumed canonical form for use in national religious festivals, and finally passed, with all the other rich fruits of Ionian culture, across the sea again, flying before the conquering power of Persia, to Ionian Athens. There they found the patronage of a rich tyrant's brilliant court, and there they were learnedly and skilfully edited into substantially the shape in which they



have come down to us. At national religious festivals they were recognized as national religious poems, and as national history. The mythical, legendary, and purely fictitious accretions in them were seldom distinguished from the genuinely historical *nuclei*. They were thought to be the work of one man, a divine Homer. And yet they actually "represent not the independent invention of one man, but the ever moving tradition of many generations of men. They are wholes built up out of a great mass of legendary poetry, re-treated and re-created by successive poets in successive ages, the histories knitted together and made more interesting to an audience by the instinctive processes of fiction."<sup>1</sup>

When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,  
He'd 'eard men sing by land and sea;  
An' what he thought 'e might require,  
'E went and took — the same as me!

Multiply Kipling's blithe "'Omer" many times, and distribute him through five or six centuries, and you have the Homer of Professor Murray, my Homer, your Homer — perhaps.

But besides the Homeric poems, Ionia also produced a scientific spirit, which looked out on life observantly, and drew inferences from it which were fatal to a belief in the truth of those poems. It is characteristic of this period of scientific inquiry, as Professor Bury has remarked,<sup>2</sup> that sages take the place of heroes in popular fancy, or, at least, take a place beside them, and we have the myths of the Seven Wise Men. Great historical personages also loom up from the near past, like Polycrates, Periander, and Croesus, about whom fiction weaves its fascinating web. The advance of the Persian power from the Orient to the Aegean, and its spectacular conquests of the Lydian dynasty first and then of the

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 154. (2d ed., p. 189.)

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, New York, 1909.

Asiatic Greeks, made near and current events even more attractive to the Greek fancy than what were supposed to be the real events of the Homeric poems, or what the new scientific spirit denounced as the falsehoods of those poems. Truth, for a season at least, became stranger and more fascinating than fiction. The geography and peoples of the Orient were brought home to the Greek fancy by Hecataeus; the story of that all-conquering folk, the Persians, by Xanthus the Lydian and Dionysius of Miletus. That story soon included the invasions of Europe by Darius and Xerxes, and the splendor of the story, even without the exaggerations which the lively Greek fancy was sure to give it, made the undertakings and achievements of the heroic age far less impressive than they had been. In time, Thucydides could allude to them with something of scorn. To put it briefly, the new critical spirit brought the truth of the Greeks' Ancient History, as it was presented in the Homeric poems, into doubt and disbelief, and the Modern History of the Greeks became so fascinating that it absorbed the active imagination of the race.

But the Ancient History of the Greeks never emancipated itself wholly from the influence of the epic poems. The revolt against it which we see in the chronological and didactic poems of Hesiod, poems which were to tell men the truth in contrast to the falsehoods of Homer, is still expressed in the same hexameter verse. And even the later mythographers, or logographers, such as Acusilaus, who retold the epic legends in prose, merely lifted the myths to a slightly higher level of credibility by naïve rationalistic processes. The myths were not rejected, nor even approximately reduced to their historical meanings. The earliest rulers among men were still directly descended from gods, and a clumsy chronology by successive generations was made to show the connection of the great families of the present with these early demigods. Even Hellanicus, who established the first annual system of

chronology for current events, and tabulated those of so late a period as the close of the Peloponnesian War, incorporated into his Attic History, to which Thucydides alludes, this clumsy fabric of Ancient History. It is Thucydides who first cuts adrift from it. And this gives us the succession of writers who sought by what they wrote to inform rather than to please; to tell the truth, to tell of what really was, rather than of what never was: Hesiod, Acusilaus, Hellanicus, Thucydides, all devoted to fact more than to form. Each in turn, it is true, accuses his predecessor of falsehood, Hesiod Homer, Acusilaus Hesiod, and so on down the line. This is one of the curious amenities of Greek historiography.<sup>1</sup> But each is honestly in quest of the truth rather than of a pleasing form of the truth at the expense, it may be, of the truth. And Hellanicus attains his quest with a tabulation of the chief events in contemporary Greek history, first as they are related to the years of the priestesses of Hera in the temple at Argos, and then, after these sacred records had perished in the destruction of the temple by fire, as they are related to the annual archons of Athens, now an imperial Greek city.<sup>2</sup> His work was an "annals," in the strictest sense, and could have had no particular unity — no plan, culmination, or conclusion. It afforded not only no room for play of fancy, but none either for any artistic impulses. It was a catalogue of events by years of Athenian archons.

But meanwhile the really colossal events and personages of the Persian Wars, after being more or less fully recorded from the standpoint of Asiatic Greeks by Charon of Lamp-sacus, Xanthus the Lydian, Dionysius, and Hecataeus of Mile-tus, had also been committed to the processes of oral tradition, among a people of the liveliest fancy, from whom had come, by slow evolution, two of the greatest imaginative poems which the world has known. The wonders of Egypt

<sup>1</sup> *American Journal of Philology*, XVIII (1897), pp. 255-274.

<sup>2</sup> *American Journal of Philology*, XXII (1901), pp. 39-43.

and Assyria, the marvels of India and Arabia, the mysteries of Upper Asia and Scythia, had been brought by travellers and merchants within the reach and play of the lively Hellenic fancy. Wonderful facts and wondering fancy had ministered to each other for more than half a century, during which time a great Athenian empire had arisen, and the Age of Pericles had begun. Books were rare, but tales were rife, and there were professional tellers of prose tales as well as professional reciters of epic song. Written and oral material of tradition together made a thesaurus of fact and fancy before whose glowing charm even the epic cycle paled, and these bewildering treasures were reduced to splendid literary form by him who is called the "Father of History," Herodotus.

Though born in Dorian Halicarnassus, and long resident in Ionian Samos and the Pan-Hellenic Thurii of Magna Graecia; though a traveller in all the parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe where Hellenes came into touch with Barbarians, Athens was his spiritual home, the Athens of Pericles. Here his immortal work, the materials for which had been slowly accumulating during more than thirty years of the most kaleidoscopic experience, was given at last the form in which it has come down to us. It was edited and published, as we should say, during the first decade of the Peloponnesian War, in Athens, probably, and for Athenians—at least in fullest sympathy with the imperial ambitions of Athens. It gives high artistic form to the reigning beliefs of the Periclean party at Athens concerning the Persian Wars, two generations of men after the wars were fought, and one generation after the greatest hero of those wars, Themistocles, had died. Meanwhile the oral tradition of those wars—and the literary tradition was annalistic and meagre—had suffered the changes to which all oral tradition is naturally liable, and, besides, had been directly influenced by an entirely new set of loves and hates and jealousies arising from the growth of the Athenian empire and the outbreak of the

Peloponnesian War. These tended to distort and pervert the stories of services to the national cause rendered by states now in hostile relations with Athens, and to glorify the services of Athens. So far as Herodotus writes history, he writes it as a defender of Athens and the Periclean policies which had led to the Peloponnesian War. He belittles the Ionian Greeks of Asia and their heroic but ineffectual struggle for freedom; he treats Sparta with ironical depreciation; Corinth, Aegina, and Thebes with contemptuous hate; Argos and Macedonia, with whom Athens hopes yet to come into alliance, with tender respect. He does this, as Professor Bury says (*op. cit.*, p. 65), as "a historian who cannot help being partial," rather than as "a partisan who becomes a historian for the sake of his cause." And he does it at a time when, as Thucydides says (ii, 8, *fin.*, Jowett's translation), "the feeling of mankind was strongly on the side of the Lacedaemonians, and the general indignation against the Athenians was intense." We cannot take the word of Herodotus in explanation of Sparta's defense of Thermopylae, or of the stratagem of Themistocles at Salamis, or of the tactics of Pausanias at Plataea, although what he says enables us to penetrate to the truth in these matters. For he mirrors the sentiments of the community in the midst of which he writes. And this is his precise worth as a historian. We know through him what Periclean Athens liked to think and feel on these and other points.

"So far as Herodotus writes history," was said above; for that is the least of what he does. He is a collector, on a vast scale, of historical material, and an incomparable artist in reducing this heterogeneous material to coherent and attractive literary form in an age when the footnote was unknown. Geographical, ethnological, mythological, genealogical, legendary, political, military, literary, economic, architectural, and religious data, in both genuine and fictitious sort, have been strung by him in bewildering profusion

along one continuous thread—the strife between Hellenes and Barbarians from earliest times down to the capture of Sestos by the Athenians in 479. This greater theme, which gives his work the character of a universal history, was probably suggested to him by the narrower theme of Xerxes' invasion of Europe; after he had treated this, he probably elaborated the larger subject. This narrower theme occupies the third triad of the nine books into which his history has been conveniently divided — books VII, VIII, and IX — and I am willing to admit, with Mr. Macan,<sup>1</sup> though I do not think the argument for it can ever be made perfectly convincing, that these three books were “the earliest portion, or section, of the work to attain relative completeness and definite form.” They certainly constitute a distinct whole by themselves, progressively climactic in the stories of Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea, and they lend themselves to subdivision far less than the first six, or the first two triads of books. Mr. Macan well says that “no other equal portion of the work of Herodotus exhibits so remarkable a coherence, continuity, and freedom from digression, interruption, or asides as this the third and last volume, or trio, of books.”

In all the books, but especially in the last three, Herodotus is not a historian in the strict sense of the term — not as Hellanicus and Thucydides are historians. He does not seek by investigation to sift the true from the false and tell for all subsequent time what actually happened. He rather seeks to cast the vast material which he has collected on the narrower theme of Xerxes' invasion and the larger theme of the strifes between Hellene and Barbarian into such shape as is prescribed by the canons of epic and dramatic poetry, the two regnant forms of literary art, but to do this in prose. He is the prose Homer, and to some extent the prose Aeschylus, of the thesaurus of fact and fancy constituted by the oral and written tradition of what was to him modern and recent,

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Macan, *Herodotus*, Books VII-IX, London, 1908.

as contrasted with ancient and mythical time. His was the genius first to perceive that modern history in prose was capable of epic and dramatic treatment, especially of epic treatment. Comprehensive discursiveness is the breath of his nostrils. The tales which Hellenes and Barbarians have told with or without pertinency, the marvels they have seen, the divine judgments they have illustrated, the wealth they have amassed, the crimes they have committed, their intrigues, loves, hates, and sorrows — these and more than these are welcome to Herodotus, and if he does not find them in sufficient abundance, then like a true Homeric poet he invents or adapts to suit himself. It is often hard to distinguish what he invents from what he merely accepts, and it often matters little, acceptance or invention being alike heinous from the standpoint of the true historian. Credulity alternates in his work with reserve, and both are often childish. He has lost his faith in the gods and heroes of Homer, for he has travelled in Egypt; but he has the most implicit confidence in oracles, and often warps his story to prove fulfilment of them. He borrows largely from a predecessor like Hecataeus, and pays him no thanks but ridicule. Andrew Lang's priest in the City of the Ford of the Ox, who called Herodotus in the tongue of the Arabians "The Father of Liars," said that he "was chiefly concerned to steal the lore of those who came before him, such as Hecataeus, and then to escape notice as having stolen it." But all this simply emphasizes anew the fact that Herodotus was the prose Homer of the Persian Wars. Like Homer, he charmed his hearers and will always charm his readers. It was this charm which Thucydides could not forgive him. But Thucydides despised Homer. Those who do not despise Homer, but are edified by the play of fancy about fact, will agree with what Dionysius of Halicarnassus says about Herodotus (*Epist. ad Pomp.*, 3, cited by Bury, p. 42): "Herodotus knew that every narrative of great length wearies the ear of the

hearer, if it dwell without a break on the same subject; but, if pauses are introduced at intervals, it affects the mind agreeably. And so he desired to lend variety to his work and imitated Homer. If we take up his book, we admire it to the last syllable, and always want more."

But it is a literary, not a scientific, enjoyment which Herodotus affords us. We know that the panorama of the peoples and tribes of three continents which he unrolls for us is colored by the fancy of the Greeks. Greek ideas and reflections are transferred to an Oriental or Barbarian setting. We can hardly find in Herodotus what Assyria, Babylonia, Lydia, Libya, Scythia, and Egypt really were in the sixth century B.C., but rather how they mirrored themselves in the Greek imagination. It is as though we had to reconstruct for ourselves a mountain range from its distorted reflections in the bosom of a lake. In this case, however, the distorted reflection has been brought into natural perspective for us by one of the greatest literary artists of the race. He had the genius to see, what is so easy for us now to see, that Salamis and Plataea were points towards which all previous Mediterranean history converged, and from which all subsequent Mediterranean history must diverge. To have had this vision first, establishes his right to be called "The Father of History."

It was the attempt of the Oriental Persian Empire to conquer the Aegean basin which engaged the Homeric genius of Herodotus; Thucydides depicts the struggle of Athens to maintain her empire of this Aegean basin, and he does it as a contemporary and participant. An imperial democracy was a new thing in the world's experience, as was also the historical treatment of contemporary events. Current events had been chronicled in time-relations merely by Hellanicus, but Thucydides was the first to apply to them the laws of cause and effect, and, whatever his excellences or defects, he was the founder of historical science as we now



understand it, the creator of historical criticism, the discoverer of its laws, and the first teacher of the art of writing history. He whom many hold to be the greatest modern historian of antiquity, Eduard Meyer, calls him the incomparable and unequalled teacher of this art, but there are strong voices of dissent from such high praise. Those who dissent often fail to consider sufficiently the exceedingly narrow limits which Thucydides imposed upon himself; and those who agree with and echo the praise are often blind to the inadequacies of Thucydides, even within his self-imposed limits. Professor Bury, in his Harvard Lectures, seems to draw the lines with dignity and justice.

"Thucydides, an Athenian," so begins the work, "wrote the history of the war in which the Peloponnesians and Athenians fought against one another. He began to write when they first took up arms, believing that it would be great and memorable above any previous war. For he argued that both states were then at the full height of their military power, and he saw the rest of the Hellenes either siding or intending to side with one or the other of them. No movement ever stirred Hellas more deeply than this; it was shared by many of the barbarians, and might be said even to affect the world at large." He began to write, that is, when it broke out, the history of a great war, not a history of Athens or of the Peloponnesian states; not a history of Hellenic culture or of Athenian democracy; not a description of unknown countries, except as absolutely necessary, or of unknown peoples and customs; not personal descriptions or anecdotes of private life — Ion of Chios and Stesimbrotus of Thasos could do that — but a war-history. And even in writing a war-history his aim would not be to please and entertain, as Herodotus did, but to instruct. "If he who desires to have before his eyes a true picture of the events which have happened, and of the like events which may be expected to happen hereafter in the order of human things,

shall pronounce what I have written to be useful, then I shall be satisfied. My history is an everlasting possession, not a prize composition which is heard and forgotten."

Who is it that speaks with this new note of self-repression and utilitarian purpose? A man who, at the time of which he speaks, was about thirty-five years old, a citizen of Athens, who belonged by descent to a princely family of Thrace, as Cimon had, and still possessed rich estates in that country. He was highly educated after the manner of the best Sophists, and doubtless found Anaxagoras an intellectual father, as Pericles did. He was emancipated from the undue authority of tradition and custom, and given to logical analysis and criticism. His intellectual processes, that is, were distinctly modern. That he took active part in public life before the year 424 B.C., may be safely inferred from the fact that in that year he was made one of the ten *Strategi*, whose office was the highest under the Empire. Assigned to command on the coast of Thrace, he failed to prevent Brasidas from capturing Amphipolis, the northern jewel of the Empire, and was in consequence banished on pain of death. His purpose to write a history of the war, however, was not thwarted by this misfortune. Indeed, it may rather be inferred that he had now the leisure, as he had always had the means and the disposition, to continue the history which he had begun at the outbreak of hostilities in 431. "The same Thucydides of Athens," he writes in V, 26, "continued the history up to the destruction of the Athenian Empire. For twenty years I was banished from my country after I held the command at Amphipolis, and associating with both sides, with the Peloponnesians quite as much as with the Athenians, because of my exile, I was thus enabled to watch quietly the course of events, and I took great pains to make out the exact truth." It is safe inference that this banished Athenian spent much time on his estates in Thrace, and that he travelled much, where it was allowed him to travel, in the prosecution

of his inquiries. He returned to Athens in 404, after the war was over, and began to put his material into final form. Eight years, perhaps, were employed in this task, when death overtook him, before its completion. His work, unlike that of Herodotus, is therefore a fragment. Seven of the twenty-seven years during which the Athenian Empire was fighting to maintain itself find no record in what has come down to us from Thucydides, and the last of the eight books into which the extant material has been judiciously divided by ancient critics plainly lacks the author's final revision. But three distinct manners are plainly to be seen in what we have of the work — a philosophic manner, as in the first book; an annalistic manner, as in books two, three, four, and five (resumed again in the incomplete eighth book); and an episodic manner, as in the story of the campaign at Pylos and Sphacteria, of the siege of Plataea, or the major story of the Sicilian expedition. All three manners are alike characterized by a dramatic method which projects events and persons as it were upon a stage, and leaves them to act out there the Fall of the Athenian Empire. Apparently, but only in appearance, the author pronounces few judgments on men and events, leaving them for the judgment of his readers. His detachment, in all three manners, has certainly never been surpassed. An oligarch in political convictions, to whom an extreme democracy was "manifest folly," he yet gives us a sympathetic and spirited picture of the Athenian democracy under Pericles, in which inherent weaknesses are not suffered to obscure pure and lofty ideals. An Athenian to the core, he never belittles Spartan nobility and greatness, but gives us in his portrait of Brasidas a character hardly second to that of Pericles. An admirer of the Athenian Empire, a participant in its honors, and stimulated to literary activity by its splendor, as Herodotus had been by that of the Persian Empire, he uncovers with relentless hand the greed and cruelty which marked its growth, culmination, and

decline. In historical philosophy our best modern historians may well surpass him, especially as the appreciation of economic laws is a modern acquisition. But in episodic power, and, above all, in personal detachment from the characters and events of his story, it is no exaggeration to say that he remains unsurpassed.

The philosophic manner of Thucydides may be best illustrated by a brief outline of the general introduction to his narrative of the war formed by his first book, which was clearly written after the war was over, *i.e.* after 404 B.C.

A brief *prooemium* emphasizes the greatness of his theme. The empire of the Hellenic world was at stake. The earlier history of this Hellenic world is rapidly reviewed in the clear light of reason, which uncovers the falsity of legend and romantic oral tradition, and a new standard is set for the treatment of ancient and recent history. Coming to the treatment of contemporary and current history—a new art entirely—he says: “Of the events of the war I have not ventured to speak from any chance information, nor according to any notion of my own; I have described nothing but what I either saw myself, or learned from others of whom I made the most particular inquiry” (i, 22, 2). He catches oral tradition, therefore, in the making, and not, as Herodotus did, after a generation or two of romantic expansion or partisan distortion. The war which he is to describe had a deep, underlying general cause—the growth of the Athenian Empire into formidable dimensions; and also immediate and special occasions, such as the Athenian alliance with Corcyra and the siege of Potidaea. Both the immediate occasions and the general cause are treated at length, and then more briefly the various diplomatic steps which preceded the actual declaration of war by Sparta and her Peloponnesian confederacy. This is a philosophical method, and, though new in the world then, it can hardly be improved upon now. Various economic relations may be brought into

prominence in setting forth the general underlying cause of the war, as Mr. Cornford has lately so well done,<sup>1</sup> but, remembering that economic science is a development of the nineteenth century, historical students may well rest satisfied with the elaborate introduction of Thucydides. Contrast the semi-playful tone with which Herodotus introduces his story of the Persian Wars. Some Phoenicians carried off Io from Argos, and in retaliation some Greeks carried off Europa from Phoenicia. "Bearing these things in mind," Alexander the son of Priam carried off Helen, and the Greeks were fools enough, according to the Persian view, to make a fuss about it and lead an army into Asia. Hence the enmity of the Persians. It is true that as regards the initial outrage of the series the Phoenicians claim that Io was no better than she should have been, and followed them of her own free will. "Which of these two accounts is true," says Herodotus (i, 5, Rawlinson's translation), "I shall not trouble to decide. I shall proceed at once to point out the person who first within my knowledge commenced aggressions on the Greeks, after which I shall go forward with my history." The difference between the artistic story-teller and the philosophical historian could not be made plainer.

The annalistic manner of Thucydides is often dry and tedious. But it is certain that even this manner is an advance upon its greatest exponent hitherto, namely Hellanicus; and the fact that Thucydides was obliged to establish his own system of chronology makes us charitable. It is easy for us, with our perfected calendar, to fix with precision the temporal relations of events. It was not easy for Thucydides to do so. Lists of archons, or other official personages, were used in different cities of Hellas to mark the time of past events, and Hellanicus had finally catalogued his events according to Athenian archons, a good standard certainly throughout the Athenian Empire. But, Thucydides objects (v, 20, 2),

<sup>1</sup> F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, London, 1907.

“whether an event occurred in the beginning, or in the middle, or whatever might be the exact point, of a magistrate’s term of office, is left uncertain by such a mode of reckoning.” He therefore measured time by summers and winters, counting each summer and winter as a half-year, and established with infinite precision his initial year and event. In the fifteenth year of the peace which was concluded after the recovery of Euboea, the forty-eighth year of Chrysis the high-priestess of Argos, “Aenesias being ephor at Sparta, and at Athens Pythodorus having two months of his archonship to run, in the sixth month after the engagement at Potidaea, and at the beginning of spring, about the first watch of the night an armed force of Thebans entered Plataea,” and the war was on. This impresses us as a large apparatus for small resultant precision, since we can glibly say that at half-past four o’clock on the morning of the 12th of April, 1861 A.D., the first shot of our Civil War was fired. But since Thucydides had devised a system of chronology far superior to anything in use before him, it is small wonder that he makes much of it, and so becomes wearisome to us moderns, especially if the events which he chronicles seem to us, as many of them do, trivial. In relation to his theme, the behavior of the Athenian Empire under stress and strain of war, they can rarely be called trivial.

Of the third manner of Thucydides, which I have called the episodic, *i.e.* the manner in which he narrates the great episodes of the war, surely little need be said here, when so good a judge of narrative as Macaulay has pronounced his story of the Sicilian Expedition the “*ne plus ultra* of human art.” And time would fail to speak sufficiently here of his digressions, few in number, always logically connected with the main story, and always peculiarly telling from the fact that they seem a condescension on the part of one whose aim is far higher than merely to entertain. In Herodotus, the entertaining digression rises almost to the dignity of a main

object; in Thucydides, it is a rare jewel in a severe setting. And yet how graceful and fanciful and altogether charming Thucydides can be, in spite of his scorn for the historical charmer, is to be seen in the digression which depicts the career of Themistocles after his ostracism (i, 135-138). Threading his way through the maze of legend which had accumulated about the figure of Themistocles after his departure from the better known parts of Hellas, Thucydides has not the heart to eliminate from his story certain most romantic features, and shows us in the scene at the palace of Admetus, King of the Molossians, an ability to follow and develop Homeric suggestions fully equal to that of Herodotus. It is like a smile upon a stern face (λέων ἐγέλασεν ἐνταῦθα<sup>1</sup>).

On the speeches also in Thucydides the whole time now at our disposal might profitably be spent.<sup>2</sup> A purely ornamental literary device in Homer and Herodotus has been lifted by him into a means for securing that personal detachment from the events and characters of his story which is the despair of all who come after him, and an apparent objectivity of presentation which is seen only in the best drama. These speeches range all the way from the brief hortatory appeal of a commander to his soldiers just before a battle, through the lengthy addresses of embassies to parliamentary assemblies, up to the matchless speech put into the mouth of Pericles ostensibly to commemorate the citizens of Athens fallen in battle during an uneventful year of the war, but really to set forth the historian's broad conception of the imperial democracy of Athens, now fallen, and of the high ideals of that democracy's first ruler and guide. "I have put into the mouth of each speaker," says Thucydides (i, 22, 1), "the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as

<sup>1</sup> Scholiast on i, 126, 3.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Jebb, "The Speeches of Thucydides," in Abbott's *Hellenica*, Oxford, 1880.

I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavored, as nearly as I could, to give the general purport of what was actually said." As to Professor Bury's interesting suggestion that the speeches composed in his more obscure manner contain more of what Thucydides thought was "proper to the occasion," and those composed in his simpler manner more of "what was actually said," we may be somewhat skeptical. And summing the matter up, we may say that in Thucydides, as in Herodotus, for all their deficiencies, there are certain high qualities, and more in Thucydides and higher than in Herodotus, which have never been surpassed by writers of history. How potent still is the influence of Thucydides may be clearly seen by those who know him in the pages of Mr. Rhodes's great and now standard history of our Civil War.

The interrupted task of Thucydides was completed by Xenophon, who tried to follow his methods and continue his spirit, but succeeded with only a faint success. The modern historian has nothing to learn from Xenophon that his master does not better teach, except, perhaps, in the matter of biography. The words of Grote are familiar: "It is at this point that we have to part company with the historian Thucydides. . . . The full extent of this irreparable loss can hardly be conceived. . . . To pass from Thucydides to the *Hellenica* of Xenophon, is a descent truly mournful; and yet, when we look at Grecian history as a whole, we have great reason to rejoice that even so inferior a work as the latter has reached us." In Xenophon's completion of the history of the Peloponnesian War we welcome the method and manner of Thucydides, but we miss his discerning power, and, above all, his detachment. For Xenophon had only a mediocre talent, and besides was a partisan; a partisan, too, not of Athens, his native city, but of Sparta. And in his continuation of Greek history down to 362, we can never forgive him the distortion of view which elevates so unduly



the personality of Agesilaus of Sparta, and depreciates so unduly, almost to the point of utter neglect, that of the Theban Epaminondas, whom Cicero called "princeps Graecorum." It is not too harsh a judgment to call Xenophon in history, as in philosophy, an agreeable dilettante.

Of his contemporary, Cratippus, whom Plutarch clearly regards as the leading historian of Greece for the period following the point at which Thucydides's work breaks off, we know too little to pass any broad judgment upon him, even allowing, with some English scholars, that a considerable historical fragment discovered at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt by the Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt should be attributed to him and not to Theopompus. And what little we can learn about Philistus of Syracuse, the historian of Sicily and the two tyrants Dionysius, leads us to think that Cicero was apt in styling him a miniature Thucydides.

But now, with the disappearance of Epaminondas from the scene of his triumphs, with the rise of the Macedonian power to political supremacy in Greece, and with the remarkable intellectual domination of all Hellas by the orator Isocrates, a new political idea and a new literary form became current, and forced into new lines the art of writing history. The new political idea was that of the unity of the Greeks against Persia, and the new literary form was rhetorical prose. Historical writing became more widely national, and rhetorical devices ministered to the pleasure of hearers and readers as epic poetry or epic prose narrative had once done. When, therefore, Ephorus of Cyme wrote his *Hellenica*, or History of Greece, though he had a large national theme, corresponding well to the imperial theme of Thucydides, he did not continue the line of historical writers who, like Hellanicus and Thucydides, were devoted to fact more than to form, and wrote to instruct rather than to please — as Hesiod the poet had done, in protest against Homer — but rather the line which culminated in Herodotus, and

affected the Homeric manner and charm. The manner and the charm of Ephorus were new, but they were his main objects in writing. "The form was of more importance than the substance, and freely shaped the substance to its needs." And, in true Homeric fashion, he did not hesitate to cater to the reigning taste by the embellishment or even the invention of detail. He sacrificed truth to rhetorical effect. And yet he achieved an immense popularity, and established what has been called "the Vulgate of Greek history." One might be tempted to call his contemporary and rival, Theopompus of Chios, the Thucydides of this rhetorical period, as Ephorus was its Herodotus; but in Theopompus also, in spite of his erudition and industrious quest of the truth, especially in his huge chronicle of contemporary history, the *Philippica*, the rhetorical element triumphs over the didactic, and besides, a certain bigotry and bitterness of partisanship, together with a pessimistic skepticism and an indiscriminating censoriousness, combine to make him rather a soured and crabbed Herodotus, if that is conceivable, than a later Thucydides. From a historiography which is the slave of formal rhetoric, the modern historian has nothing to learn except how not to write history, and his regret that Ephorus and Theopompus are known principally in the citations of later compilers is tempered by the remembrance of the kind fortune which has brought Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon down to him in their entirety.

But while Ephorus and Theopompus were yet writing, a new personage had entered the ancient world, who, in an amazingly short time, completely transformed it. Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedon, in a meteoric career of less than twenty years, surpassed in actual and palpable achievements all that the glowing imaginations of poets and prose romancers had devised for men to admire and wonder at. Once more, as in the sixth and fifth centuries, history became stranger and more fascinating than romance had been, and led the

way to still bolder flights of fancy in a new romance. The wonders of India and the extreme East now eclipsed what had once been wonderful in Persia and the nearer East, as that had eclipsed the wonders of the heroic age, and Greek fancy grew by what it fed upon. On Alexander himself the marvellous in his career seems to have produced some spell, nor was it wholly from political reasons that he came to think himself, and to wish others to think him, a god. On the smaller spirits in his retinue the marvellous in their experience produced the effect of an apparent incapacity to state a common fact as such. There were sober heads among them, it is true — a Callisthenes, an Aristobulus, a Ptolemy, a Nearchus, and from them we know the truth about Alexander's campaigns, but only because the Graeco-Roman Arrian, four centuries later, recurred to their testimonies. Their contemporaries would none of them, but preferred the extravagant exaggerations of Onesicritus, or the wilder flights of fancy which marked the current and popular oral tradition. For Alexander was accompanied from the first by a travelling literary court of poets, philosophers, and historians, and each of the momentous steps in his progress was celebrated by athletic and literary festivals to which the greatest artists of Greece were summoned. His frequent exchange of worn-out soldiers for fresher and younger ones also kept up a constant line of oral communication between his deeds and the riotous fancy of the stay-at-homes. But so rapid and dazzling were his achievements that contemporary imagination could not keep pace with them. Especially after the conqueror had vanished wholly from the view of the Hellenic world during the three years of his Indian expedition did the Hellenic imagination revel in the historical and mythological possibilities of the case. Heracles and Dionysus were not only imitated, but outdone, by this new god of conquest. Moreover, the mental energies of the Ionian Hellenes, deflected from political life by the Macedonian supremacy,

found vent more than ever in literary expression. Old forms of expression were cultivated into decadence, and new forms were devised. The literature of pure romance began. There was, however, no such recognized channel, as yet, for the flow of pure fancy and invention in prose as was afforded later by professedly fictitious narrative — the romance and the novel. These were yet to be set apart as distinct forms of literary art. Fancy and invention therefore found play in the realm of what should have been historical narrative. And so it came to pass that before Alexander had been dead thirty years, a mass of legend and romance had grown up around the main authenticated facts of his career. This mass has been varied in its rhetorical treatment rather than sensibly increased by the romantic invention which has ever since been busy with that career, down through the middle ages, and into the times of our Old English literature.

This romantic version of Alexander's career, with its firm basis of authenticated facts and its luxuriant envelope of legend and fictitious anecdote, vague with all the vagueness of popular tradition, found its Herodotus in Cleitarchus of Colophon, a contemporary, but not a companion, of Alexander. He was the son of Deinon of Colophon, who was an imaginative historian of eastern realms, and a pupil of Stilpo of Megara, a rhetorician and philosopher celebrated above all for grace and cleverness of literary style. His history of Alexander, highly rhetorical, and full of the wildest flights of fancy, became the standard, as the history of Greece down to Alexander by Ephorus was standard. It forestalled the sober testimonies of the four sober companions of Alexander to whom Arrian, four centuries later, led the world back, for, at the time, it met the world's demands. We know Cleitarchus chiefly through late Roman compilers like Diodorus Siculus, Justin, and Quintus Curtius, but we understand perfectly why the author of the treatise "On the Sublime" calls him empty and bombastic, and why even Plutarch dis-

credits him. "At this time," says Plutarch (*Alexander*, xlvi), "most writers say that the Queen of the Amazons paid a visit to Alexander, of whom are Cleitarchus and Onesicritus. But Ptolemy and Aristobulus say that this is fiction." Cleitarchus therefore followed Onesicritus in preference to Ptolemy and Aristobulus, and of Onesicritus, thanks to Lucian, we can form a sure estimate.

Just after the great Indian campaign against Porus and his elephants, and while Alexander and his army were descending the Hydaspes in their extemporized flotilla, a certain historian, so Lucian tells us (*Quom. hist. scrib.*, xii), bent on flattery, read aloud to Alexander what he had written about a fierce duel between Alexander in person and the gigantic Porus mounted on an elephant. Now we have in Arrian what is substantially Ptolemy's account of the battle with Porus, and there neither was nor could have been at any time during the battle a duel between Porus and Alexander. But just as at Issus and Arbela romantic historians insist, against all the facts, on bringing Darius and Alexander into personal combat, so in the struggle with Porus the flattering historian thought that the two leaders must have their Homeric duel. Here we can put our finger on Alexander-romance in the very making. As the historian read aloud to Alexander, thinking to gratify the king by inventing the most fabulous exploits for him, Alexander caught away the writing from him and hurled it into the river, saying, "I ought to do the same to you, my man, for fighting such a duel and killing such elephants for me with a single javelin." This historian, as we learn from another passage in the same work of Lucian (chap. xl), was Onesicritus, the Munchausen of Alexander's companions. And it is in all probability his version of the visit of the Amazonian queen to Alexander which Arrian mentions as "reported" (vii. 13, 3), only to remark: "but this is recorded neither by Ptolemy nor Aristobulus, nor by any one else capable of testimony in such

matters. And personally, I do not believe that the race of Amazons was surviving at that time, nor before Alexander's time either, or Xenophon would have mentioned them." This reputed visit of the queen of the Amazons to Alexander may serve as a fair specimen of the countless bold inventions which the history of Cleitarchus adopted.

With Cleitarchus and his history of Alexander, which was for a long time canonical, we may well close this brief survey of Greek historiography. In the century after Alexander, Duris of Samos was led to write a history of Greece in which, judging from the fragments of it which have come down to us, startling effects were sought and gained by resort to coarse and realistic sensationalism, a new manifestation of the Homeric and Herodotean desire to please rather than to instruct, but not one which became dominant. With Timaeus of Tauromenium and with Polybius the Roman spirit manifests itself, and historiography ceases to be distinctively Hellenic. "Distinctively Greek historiography," to repeat from the opening paragraph of the lecture, "may be said to end with the historians of Alexander's career. And it ends, as it begins, with a triumph of fancy and invention over fact and re-presentation. In the middle ground, in Thucydides and Xenophon, the desire to inform is duly enthroned beside the desire to please; but the Greek hearer or reader usually preferred a flight of the imagination to a statement of the truth; and the sovereign names among the Greeks themselves were Homer, Herodotus, Ephorus, and Cleitarchus, names representing a body of highly imaginative and mainly fictitious poetry, and a body of highly imaginative and largely fictitious prose." And our survey has itself made plain, without further definition, the permanent value of this body of historical literature. It has such value if it does no more than illustrate, by two splendid specimens in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, artistic success in writing history that charms, and artistic success in writing history that

edifies. Imagination a good historian must always have, creative imagination even, especially in the problems of psychological reconstruction, wherein the best modern historians make most advance upon Thucydides; and rhetorical skill a good historian must have, in order to win readers for the truths which he has laboriously elicited from complex testimonies. But the imagination must not become inventive purely, nor must the inventions of imagination or the attractions of rhetoric ever become the main object of the historian. How easy to illustrate from the works of modern historians with which we are all familiar! How easy, also, to follow Professor Bury when he says, "Within the limits of the task he attempted Thucydides was a master in the craft of investigating contemporary events, and it may be doubted whether, within those limits, the nineteenth century would have much to teach him."

B. PERRIN.

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